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September 20, 2001

For Immediate Release:

GIFT OF STATE FLAG TO EIU ROTC TAKES ON NEW MEANING FOR MYERS

CHARLESTON – Illinois Sen. Judy Myers' perspective on a gift she gave a few weeks ago dramatically changed following the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Myers, meeting with cadets in Eastern Illinois University's U.S. Army ROTC unit, presented the Panther Battalion with an Illinois flag which had earlier flown over the state Capitol in Springfield. She thought it a fitting gift for this group of about 80 young people who, while students first and foremost, have decided to round out their academic endeavors with supplemental training and education provided by the U.S. Army.

After learning of the attacks on the Pentagon and the New York World Trade Center last week, Myers was struck by the thought of just how fitting her gift had really been.

"It was appropriate then, but even more so now," she said. "We as a nation thought we were safe; last week, we became targets. And now our country has a focus that we didn't have before.

"When I met with those cadets, I got the opportunity to speak with some of them one-on-one. They are dedicated young people who feel some sort of commitment to being there for their country. And now, only a few weeks later, they're facing a bigger challenge than any of us

-more-

could ever have imagined -- a challenge they are willing and eager to take."

The senator noted that young adults from throughout the country are demonstrating a similar resolve, anxious to be put to the test on America's behalf. Myers, whose own children are slightly older than the cadets she met, said her thoughts now center more toward friends' children who are closer to the age of traditional college students and, thus, may face greater military involvement should the U.S. situation continue to escalate.

"Young adults of that age from all over the nation are demonstrating a similar sentiment -- they want to do something to help their country during this troublesome time.

"Their enthusiasm and resolve have really touched me," Myers said. "They, just like those cadets I met, are young men and women who have a choice. And that choice may lead them into active military involvement."

She continued, "While it's a sad situation overall, it's indeed gratifying to see so bright a hope emerging from such sadness and darkness."

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***MEDIA NOTE: Eastern's Office of Media Relations can provide those interested with an e-mail copy of a photo taken of the flag presentation which took place earlier this semester. Contact Melinda Matthews at (217) 581-7650.***

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Pictured, from left to right, are EIU Cadet Battalion Commander William Petersen of Salem; Illinois Sen. Judy Myers; Martha Brown, acting chair, EIU's Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Sciences; and Cadet Jessica Denney, EIU Pershing Rifles Commander, of Willis, Texas.